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ABSTRACT

A key concept in understanding a person's lifestyle is family constellation. Data on birth order and ordinal position of a child in the family can provide the trained observer with an immediate impression of grouping within the family and the position an individual perceives himself to hold. Observers trained in lifestyle assessment sought to identify relevant aspects of a person's lifestyle through data provided by family constellation information, using questionnaire results obtained from a sample of high-achieving students and delinquents. The raters, working independently, categorized each subject as either a high-achieving student or a delinquent. The results demonstrate that identification on the basis of simplified family data is possible, although the data do not explain how the trained rater formulates conclusions. Further research to clarify the identification process is desirable and could lead to specific training of life style assessment raters. Such training would have utility for teachers, counselors, school psychologists, and others who interact with children. (Author/CS)

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ABBREVIATED LIFESTYLE ASSESSMENT INFORMATION AS AN INDICANT OF DELINQUENT VERSUS HIGH ACHIEVING MALE JUVENILES

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ABBREVIATED LIFESTYLE ASSESSMENT INFORMATION AS AN INDICANT OF DELINQUENT VERSUS HIGH ACHIEVING MALE JUVENILES

Adlerian-Driekursian literature is replete with references to the importance of ordinal position to the lifestyle development of the child (e. g., Adler, 1949; Allred, 1968; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964). Some statements regarding this concept as it relates to lifestyle theory lack specificity. In some instances they address the chronological order of birth, but not the psychological implications associated with ordinal position (Nield, Ward & Edgar, 1976).

One key concept in understanding a person's lifestyle is the assessment of family constellation. The primary elements of the family constellation are birth order and ordinal position. These data provide the trained observer with an immediate impression of the groupings within the family and the position an individual perceives him or herself as holding. These perceptions are influenced by the person's position in the family as well as his or her relationship by sex to other siblings. This process includes the assessment of interpersonal relationships between members of the family; i.e., the psychological variable of ordinal position. One perception which is improtant in lifestyle assessment is that of the sibling competitor. The brother or sister identified as the competitor would be the individual most different in character, interest, and temperament. The area in which the competitor is believed to be successful will be the area in which the individual withdraws. Conversely, the individual will move in to fill the vacuum where the competitor has failed.

Baruth, Eckstein, and Mahrer (1978) refer to this phenomenon as the teeter-totter effect.

Lombardi (1975) has suggested numerous techniques which can be utilized for lifestyle assessment, such as case history data, psychological interviewing, and naturalistic observation. Another well received and original approach is the investigation of the individual's family constellation by the interpretation of early recollections (Sonstegord, 1978). The purpose of this investigation was to inquire as to whether one trained in lifestyle assessment can identify relevant aspects of a person's lifestyle through data provided from a simplified sample of family constellation information.

Method

Subjects

Male subjects were 44 high achieving students and 54 delinquents. Subjects ranged from 14 to 18 years of age in both groups. High achievement status was defined as a grade point average at or above 3.5 on a 4.0 scale for the preceding semester. The delinquent subjects were obtained from a youth training center for delinquent boys.

Raters

Two doctoral students trained in lifestyle assessment served as raters of the questionnaire results obtained from the subjects. Each rater worked independently.

Instrument

A standard questionnaire (Baruth, Eckstein & Mahrer, 1978) adapted from the full questionnaire in the Guide for Interviewers Establishing the Life Style, (Dreikurs, 1967) was used to measure family constellation,

description of siblings and ratings of siblings. Section one identified sibling position and the relationship by sex of the subject to the other possible siblings. Section two had two questions to determine the sibling most different and the sibling most like the subject. Section three asked the subject to compare himself to his siblings on 10 characteristics by identifying the brother or sister most like him and least like him on each dimension. All data were typed and coded prior to analysis by the raters.

Procedure

All subjects were questioned in regularly scheduled classroom environments. Subjects were advised of their right to decline or cease participation at any time. Questionnaires were distributed, instructions for completing them were given and all questions were answered. All boys present in each condition completed the questionnaire. Typed and coded results were given to the two raters for analysis. The raters' task was to categorize each subject as either a high achieving student or a delinquent. Two weeks later response sheets were rearranged in random order and each rater again evaluated them.

Results

Categorization of subjects as being in either the high achievement or delinquent group constituted a descrete variable. Intrarater and interrater agreements were analyzed with a sign test. These data were converted to Z scores. An algebraic manipulation was performed to obtain a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient using the formula $Z=r\sqrt{n-2}\,/\sqrt{1-r^2}$, where r=the correlation coefficient and n=the total number of categorizations

made. Results for these calculations are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Highly significant results were obtained reflecting the extent and degree of reliability with which the raters differentiated high achieving boys from delinquent boys. Data were reliably significant across trials for each rater and between raters collapsing across trials.

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted for intrarater and interrater frequencies and are shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

These results show that the functional relationship between the use of family constellation information by trained raters for the differentiation of high achieving and delinquent boys is reliable.

Discussion

This study offers evidence that a person trained in lifestyle assessment given simplified family constellation information can reliably differentiate between high achieving boys and delinquents boys. These data show that this identification process is possible; they do not explain how the trained rater formulates these conclusions. Further research to identify these processes seems appropriate. Once identified more expli-

cit and specific training of raters would be possible. Since statistically reliable results were possible with the simplified family constellation questionnaire, there is further likelihood a broader group of persons could be trained to make these identifications. The utility of receiving training in lifestyle assessment for teachers, counselors, school psychologists, parents and other professionals and nonprofessionals who interact with children is obvious. By being able to identify discouraged students who may develop delinquent tendencies at an early stage would make preventative measures possible. Further studies could also be conducted to attempt to determine the predictive validity of the simplified questionnaire and rating procedures to encourage potentially accelerated students in terms of their academic performance.

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Table 1

Intrarater and Interrater Agreements,

Z Scores and Reliability Coeffecients

	Intrarater		Interrater
	Rater A	Rater B	Raters A & B
Agreements	86	78	81
Z Scores	14.3[a]	12.4[a]	13.1[a]
Pearson r's	.82[b]	.79[b]	.80[b]

[a] $p < .001$.

[b] $p < .001$.

Table 2

Observed and Expected Frequencies of

Correct Categorizations For

Each Rater and Between Raters

	Rater A[a]		Rater B[b]		Raters A & B[c]	
Categorization	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe
Correct	82	49	81	49	163	98
Incorrect	16	49	17	49	33	98

[a] $\chi^2_1 = 44.4$ (1), $p < .01$.

[b] $\chi^2_1 = 41.78$ (1), $p < .01$.

[c] $\chi^2_1 = 270.22$ (1), $p < .01$.